

Dear Montgomery County Council,

We write in support of Expedited Bill 36-20, Forest Conservation, with one exception.

The environment that we all depend upon is in crisis. That is not hyperbole. Global warming and pollution are destroying communities and causing death and disease across the United States. Montgomery County is not immune from this worsening catastrophe. Our lives and health and property are as much at risk as those of the people of California or Louisiana. In this month alone, Montgomery County suffered extreme rainfall and widespread flooding. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2020/09/10/dc-area-forecast-tropical-downpours-today-could-produce-areas-flooding/>

Trees are a necessary means of saving our environment. They clean our air, prevent stormwater runoff, and preserve our topsoil. Tree canopies provide shade and habitat for birds and other wildlife. Moreover, as you are all aware, each and every one of us is living under great stress in these trying times, when the pandemic has upended all our lives. The presence of trees in our community helps people cope with this stress and improves our mental and physical health.

For these reasons, we urge you to pass Expedited Bill 36-20, Forest Conservation. The more trees we have in Montgomery County – in particular, the more mature trees with large canopies, as opposed to small decorative trees that offer minimal benefits – the better. The last thing Montgomery County should do is destroy mature trees and the benefits they bring. You must save as many mature trees as possible.

That said, we wholeheartedly agree with these comments from the Maryland League of Conservation Voters: “We do not want to see mature, priority forests removed so that a developer can get stormwater credit for installing a stream restoration project. The existing forest would provide more environmental benefits. Please amend 6 22A-5. Exemptions (v)(1) to ensure that priority forests around restoration projects are not exempted from forest conservation protections.”

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Yours truly,

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